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The Native Calendar of Central America and Mexico. By Dr. Daniel G. Brinton. Philadelphia, 1893, pp. 59, 8vo.

As Dr. Brinton announced to the public, in his introduction to the "Annals of the Cakchiquels," that he "proposed in a future work to discuss the methods of reckoning time in use in Central America," we presume the work with the above title, which has just appeared, is the fulfillment of that promise.

Dr. Brinton is better equipped with material for this investigation than any other person, and his work was received with the hope that we should find therein the solution of some of the troublesome problems relating to this Calendar. Although, like all his works, the book contains much that is valuable and interesting, a careful examination results almost in a feeling of disappointment. It is probable that he and Dr. Seler have together made the most that is possible out of the linguistic and historical materials; if so, we are forced to the conclusion that the solution will only be reached when further advance has been made in the interpretation of the hieroglyphic writing, a branch of the subject upon which Dr. Brinton does not enter.

The scope of the work, which is based chiefly on linguistic material, may be indicated by the following headings: "Geographical extension of the Calendar system; Mathematical basis of the Calendar; Where did it originate; Analysis of the day and month names; Symbolism of the day names; and General symbolic significance of the Calendar."

In his explanation of the names of the days he follows substantially the same method of reasoning as that adopted by Dr. Seler in his paper on the same subject, though the conclusion reached in reference to the individual names is not always the same. However, they agree in concluding that the corresponding names of the different calendars were intended to express substantially the same idea; hence that they had a common origin. This conclusion appears to be justified as to a majority of the names; but the relation in some cases is made out by apparently circuitous interpretations.

It seems rather singular that Dr. Brinton, who is inclined to the belief that the Calendar originated with the "ancient branch of the Mayan stock, who inhabited the present states of Chiapas and Tabasco," should be so largely influenced in his definition

of the Maya names by the signification of the Zapotec and Nahuatl names. This, however, is probably due to the fact that the signification of the latter is better known than that of the former.

In one or two places where reference is made to Dr. Seler's opinions, they do not appear to be correctly given. Under the "Fifth Day," *Chicchán*, he states that "Dr. Seler says that 'undoubtedly' it means 'a sign marked [mark?] or taken [token?].' To give this sense it would have to be read *chech*." Yet this author in his paper* derives the name from *Can*, "serpent," and *Chi*, *Chii*, "mouth, to bite," thus interpreting the day name by "biting serpent." We may also remark that Henderson (MS. Lexicon) gives *Chicul*, "sign, mark, ceremony, token;" and as a verb, "to mark, show, sign."

Under the "Ninth Day," *Muluc*, he refers to the same author as follows: "The Tzentel and Maya *Mulu* and *Muluc* are from the radical *mul*, to heap up, to pile up; which evidently cannot refer to the 'gathering together of waters,' as Dr. Seler suggests, but rather to the heaping up of the clouds in the sky." Dr. Seler does suggest that we may conceive here the idea of a "gathering of waters," but it is evident from what follows that he alludes to the gathering in the heavens, from which the rain descends, which is precisely the same idea as that suggested by Dr. Brinton.

The analysis of the month names is brief, and, so far as it relates to those of the Maya Calendar, is based upon the theory that they refer chiefly to the religious ceremonies and festivals observed at certain seasons. While it is true that they are radically different from those in use among other tribes of this stock, it is doubtful whether the method of their derivation could have been so totally different from that by which the names of the months of other calendars were obtained, as this theory implies. The names of the latter, in regard to which Dr. Brinton furnishes some new and valuable data, appear to refer to certain natural phenomena, agricultural operations, the seasons when certain animals are most plentiful, when certain flowers bloom or fruits ripen, etc. This is precisely what we should expect, and hence hesitate to accept a theory of wide

* Zeitsch. für Ethn., 1888, Heft 2.

variation in one of the tribes without stronger evidence. From the study of the month symbols found in the Dresden Codex, I am inclined to believe their interpretation will show that the Maya month names have been derived, as a rule, in the same way as those of other tribes.

It is to be regretted that the author has failed to give us the evidence on which he bases his conclusion that the Quiche-Cakchiquel calendar followed the four-year system, having four "year-bearers" as the other calendars. If, as he has shown us in the "Annals," "every year ends on a day, *Ah*," it would seem impossible, if the days followed one another in proper order, that the years could begin with different days; nor will the fact that the closing day was numerically three less than that of the preceding aid in the adjustment.

The closing section of the paper brings clearly before us the goal which the author strives to reach, and leaves the inference that his analyses, as we would naturally expect, have been influenced to some extent by his theory of the scope and object of the calendar system. This theory he briefly summarizes as follows: "That it was intended to cover the career of human life from the time of birth until death at an old age;" in other words, that it is an outlining or symbolic representation of the twenty steps into which Dr. Brinton conceives the natives arranged the single human life. "In the twenty headings under which the agencies which influence human life were arranged, the ancient seers believed," etc., are the words with which he begins his final paragraph.

Our thanks are due to Dr. Brinton for this contribution to the subject of the "Native Calendar" of Mexican and Central American tribes, but we are forced to the conclusion that more material progress in the solution of the problem will not be made until the written characters and time symbols have been deciphered.

NOTE.—I think it possible the calendar may yet be traced to Polynesia. There is strong evidence pointing that way.

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